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Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Chad

Summary

The present report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005). It is submitted to the Council and its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict as the second country report on children and armed conflict in Chad. The report covers the period from July 2007 to June 2008 and focuses on six grave violations perpetrated against children in Chad.

The report highlights the regional dimension of the violence in Chad and how it affects on the protection of children. The political, military and security situation remains highly volatile, owing to the continuation of armed conflict between the Chad armed forces and armed rebel groups, the presence in eastern Chad of foreign rebel groups, cross-border raids by the Janjaweed, and continuing inter-ethnic tensions, mainly between Arab and non-Arab communities. The report shows that, in this context, children are still the primary victims of the ongoing conflict in Chad, particularly through recruitment into and use in armed forces and groups; killing and maiming, especially caused by landmines and unexploded ordnance; denial of humanitarian access; and targeting of humanitarian personnel and assets. The report identifies State and non-State parties responsible for exactions against children. It also describes the follow-up and programmatic response to violations.

The report acknowledges the significant challenges in addressing grave violations against children in the context of Chad, and notes that little progress has been achieved since the previous report. It urges State and non-State actors to enter into a dialogue with the United Nations to develop action plans to identify and release children and put an end to all grave violations of children's rights. The report stresses the need for regional collaboration among United Nations partners in the areas of information exchange and programmatic planning, so as better to address cross-border issues such as child recruitment, abduction and reintegration.

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I. Introduction

1. The present country report has been prepared pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) on children and armed conflict and covers the situation of children and armed conflict in Chad from July 2007 to June 2008. It is the second report on Chad to be reviewed by the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, but the first one to be produced within the framework of the country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting established in N'Djamena in conformity with resolution 1612 (2005).

2. The report focuses on six grave violations against children, namely, recruiting or using child soldiers; killing and maiming of children; rape or other grave sexual violence against children; denial of humanitarian access to children; attacks against schools or hospitals; and the abduction of children.

II. Overall political, military and security context

3. The Central Africa region faces a dire human rights and humanitarian crisis that flows directly from regional insecurity. The Sudan, Chad, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and even Cameroon to a certain extent have to deal with massive displacements of populations fleeing one country for the other and sometimes crossing more than one border in a few months. These regional movements create instability in countries that are deprived of the basic infrastructures and capacities to deal with this crisis.

4. Chad has experienced protracted instability and conflict since the country's independence from France in 1960. The nature and causes of conflict have shifted over time: today it is expressed in the convergence of three distinct but interrelated dimensions, namely, confrontation in eastern Chad between the Government forces and Chadian armed opposition groups; inter-communal and ethnically based violence also in the east; and the tensions between Chad and the Sudan along their common border. There are significant regional implications to the conflict along the Chad-Sudan axis, increasingly involving the Central African Republic, which has also seen protracted internal political instability.

5. The political, military and security situation in Chad remains highly volatile because of the continuation of armed conflict between the Chad armed forces and armed rebel groups, the presence in eastern Chad of foreign rebel groups, cross-border raids by the Janjaweed, and continuing inter-ethnic tensions mainly between Arab and non-Arab communities.

6. At the end of January 2008, a group of rebel movements headed to the capital. Three different rebel movements — UFDD (Union des forces pour la démocratie et le développement), RFC (Rassemblement des forces pour le changement) and UFDD-Fondamentale — united in an attempt to overthrow the President. An estimated 3,000 to 4,500 rebel troops clashed with the Government at Massaguet, 80 km from N'Djamena. Violent fighting broke out in N'Djamena itself in the first days of February, forcing some 30,000 Chadians to flee to Cameroon, and many United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations to relocate temporarily. Though the actual fighting was over by the end of the day on 3 February, a period of instability and insecurity followed. There was intensive looting of private houses and official buildings. Opposition leaders were allegedly

harassed and "disappeared" for a certain time. Key figures within the non-armed opposition, such as Lol Mahamat Choua, President of the Parti pour le rassemblement pour la démocratie et le progrès, Ibn Oumar Mahamat Saleh, President of the Parti pour les libertés et le développement, and Ngarledji Yorongar, President of the Front d'action pour le renouveau, were all arrested on 3 February, and detained incommunicado. Their whereabouts were unknown for an extended period of time. Lol Mahamat Choua and Ngarledji Yorongar have been released thanks to international and national pressure. Ibn Oumar Mahamat Saleh however is at the time of writing still reported missing.

7. The inter-ethnic conflict also continues, mainly between the Tama and Zaghawa tribes, resulting in the destruction of villages, population displacement and occupation of territory. It is estimated that 180,000 persons (at least 50 per cent of whom are children) have been internally displaced in south-eastern Chad over the past two years alone; they live largely in the Dar Sila and Assounngha departments.

8. The security situation, especially in eastern Chad, remains highly volatile. In all, there were 271 security incidents (military attacks, inter-ethnic conflict, carjacking, road bandits) during the reporting period, mostly in and around Goz Beida, Koukou, Angarana, Biltine, Guéréda, Iriba, Bahai and Gaga, Farchana and Treguine camps. The insecurity has a negative impact on the humanitarian situation and on the ability of organizations to respond to the acute needs of the population.

9. On 25 October 2007, at Syrte, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, a peace agreement was signed by the Government of Chad and the three principal rebel groups, namely UFDD, RFC and Concorde nationale tchadienne. The agreement envisaged an immediate ceasefire, the respect of the Chadian Constitution and the release of prisoners on all sides. However, fighting broke out during the last week of November 2007 between the Chad armed forces and UFDD, which resulted in high casualty rates on both sides, amplifying the considerable mistrust that already existed among parties. The fighting occurred despite the Libyan leader's guarantee of the implementation of the agreement. Moreover, just two days before the signature of the peace agreement, RFC had already made it known that it would continue its armed struggle, as the mixed commission to define the modalities of the that group's integration into the Chadian army had not yet been established. That commission was crucial to defining the integration of rebel groups into the regular army but it has never been operational.

III. Grave violations against children

A. Recruitment and use of children in armed forces and groups

10. All parties to the conflict reportedly continue to recruit and use children. This issue remains particularly difficult to address in the context of Chad. Only 10 per cent of child births are registered. There are cultural issues related to the concepts of boyhood and manhood which exacerbate the recruitment and use of children. Lack of access to education and employment opportunities also provides additional incentives for children to join armed forces and groups.

11. The recruitment and use of child soldiers in Chad is also very much related to the regional dimension of the conflict. It is extensively perpetrated by the Toroboro or Sudanese armed groups allied with the Government of Chad. Toroboro reportedly recruited children in two refugee camps at Treguine and Breidjing during the rainy season. Heavy recruitment also occurs on the basis of needs in Darfur. The Sudanese rebel movement JEM (Justice and Equality Movement) continues to recruit in and around refugee camps, notably Oure Cassoni (Bahai), the second largest camp operated by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the one closest to the Sudanese border. Both adults and children have been recruited, by force as well as voluntarily.

12. Recruitment and use of children within the Chadian armed forces have been reported. Recruited children have fled from Government training camps, returning to the internally displaced person sites from where they were recruited to report heavy abuses. The testimonies of those children have been very useful in raising awareness within communities about child rights. Most of the children who were released to UNICEF for reintegration programmes were associated with the Front uni pour le changement and very few (35) with the Chadian armed forces. However, young people in uniform can regularly be seen both in N'Djamena and in the countryside. Despite the acknowledgement by Government officials that children are associated with the armed forces, the Government provided a written guarantee to the Government of France that that was not the case, as a prerequisite to the deployment of the European Union-led military force (EUFOR).

13. Girls associated with armed forces have been observed, notably in the area around Guéréda (eastern Chad). It has however proved very difficult to obtain access to them and to date no girls have been officially released from armed forces or groups within the official framework. In 2007, the presence of girls in a battalion in the region of Guéréda was reported. The female commander of that battalion uses female guards, some of whom are under 18. Early in 2008, the battalion was still in Guéréda; it was later redeployed to Moussoro and integrated into other parts of the Chadian national army.

14. Examples of recruitment of children by armed forces and groups during the reporting period are set out below:

(a) On 17 June 2008 six children were reportedly recruited by JEM in Iridimi camp (eastern Chad). The inspector of the primary school was suspected of complicity with the recruiters. Police questioned him but he was later released. The six children have been taken to an unknown destination.

(b) On 27 June 2008 nine children were released from the gendarmerie in N'Djamena. Among them, five were formerly associated with the Front uni pour le changement and had been re-recruited by the national gendarmerie. One of them, 14 years of age, had previously benefited from the child disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme and spent six months in a transit care centre while attending school. In February 2008, the gendarmerie recruited him and the others and gave him a monthly salary of FCFA 60,000 (US$ 142). Other children, despite being demobilized and taken care of by the comprehensive child disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, have also reported that they continued to receive pay from their former military leaders for several months.

(c) In June 2008, a JEM vehicle entered the refugee camp of Mile (Guéréda) and took at least five children. After their parents came looking for them, the children were released. They reported the presence of other children in JEM ranks.

B. Killing and maiming of children

15. Indiscriminate killings within the context of armed conflict in eastern Chad are relatively rare. During the events in N'Djamena early in February 2008, there was considerable collateral damage in the Chadian capital. Bombs targeting rebel pick-ups fell on N'Djamena's central market as well as on private houses.

16. Of grave concern, however, is the presence of unexploded ordnance and landmines, especially in the north. On 6 May 1999 Chad ratified the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and promulgated a national law (No. 28) on 23 August 2006. After 30 years of war, however, Chad counts among the top 10 countries in the world in terms of victims of landmines and unexploded ordnance.

17. The Landmine Impact Survey has identified 249 mine-affected communities of which 142 are located in the northern and eastern regions of Chad. Marking the location of mines is currently very difficult as data is lacking and because of the movement of mines due to rainfall and shifting sands. Mine-clearance activities in the north of the country have not been completed and as a result the area is inaccessible to the humanitarian community.

18. There were a total of 17 child victims over the period July to December 2007 out of a total of 153 child victims in 2007. Almost a third of them lost their lives. Three girls between the ages of 4 and 7 years were killed, and a 12-year-old girl was injured. In 2008, there have been 43 victims (72 per cent children and 28 per cent adults) of unexploded ordnance: 9 of them were killed and 34 were seriously wounded. Most of the victims are male and almost all of them are civilians. The violent fighting in and around N'Djamena late in January and early in February 2008 between the national army and several rebel groups left behind a significant quantity of unexploded ordnance, raising fears of an upsurge of casualties and accidental deaths in the near future.

C. Rape and other sexual violence

19. Rape and other grave sexual violence are common in Chad, girls being the major victims. Both armed groups and community members are being reported as perpetrators of such violations. Most reported cases concern attacks and rapes of girls working in household activities outside of internally displaced persons camps. Cases are usually dealt with through local arrangements, such as financial compensation, under the authority of community chiefs and village heads. Because of the taboo surrounding sexual crimes in Chad, perpetrators are rarely, if ever, brought to justice. The climate of impunity and stigmatization of girls and women who have been raped discourages victims from reporting cases to authorities. To date, the Government has not been able or willing to prevent rape and ensure child protection against sexual violence.

20. During the reporting period several girls were victims of sexual violence in the eastern part of the country as a direct consequence of the conflict between the Government forces and the rebel groups, in addition to the assaults carried out by the Janjaweed in Chadian villages along the Chad/Sudan border. The number of such reported cases requiring hospital care is increasing on a daily basis. The problem is also aggravated by the fact that victims are mainly displaced people, always on the move, and not able to receive long-term hospital care.

21. Some examples of sexual violence in the reporting period are set out below:

(a) In Goz Beida, Koukou and Aradip, 11 cases of rape were reported, 6 of them against girls under the age of 18. The suspected perpetrators were members of the host community, or internally displaced persons themselves.

(b) A 13-year-old girl was gang raped on 3 December 2007 in N'Djamena. She died the following day at the National General Reference Hospital. One of the persons apprehended turned out to be a member of the military staff of the Chad armed forces.

(c) A 12-year-old girl was raped on 22 May 2008 in the town of Bongor (Department of Mayo Boneye) by the president of an organization of people living with HIV/AIDS. Members of the local child protection committee are trying to take the case to court. This is an example of the crimes committed in the climate of impunity fostered by the armed conflict.

(d) On 4 February 2008 three soldiers tried to rape a young girl in her own house in Am Bata district (9th arrondissement of N'Djamena). Her father was able to prevent the rape but was shot at twice. He was not injured, and the soldiers went away.

22. Other issues relating to gender-based violence in Chad need to be raised. Female genital mutilation, for instance, is widely practised mainly because of prevailing cultural norms, including in sites occupied by internally displaced persons, in particular among girls aged between 6 and 10. Finally, forced and early marriage in camps of internally displaced persons remains an issue that needs to be better monitored and documented.

D. Denial of humanitarian access and targeting of humanitarian personnel and assets

23. A significant number of incidents targeting humanitarian personnel and assets by parties to the conflict continue to be reported. In most cases such attacks take place at night. They increased during the reporting period in the region of Goz Beida-Koukou. Increasingly force is employed in these attacks, which are characterized by the use of assault rifles and rocket-propelled grenades, mainly to steal money and assets. Since foreign humanitarian workers are perceived to have both, they are particularly targeted. The local military authorities and gendarmerie rarely intervene. Some of the perpetrators are even thought to belong to the Chad armed forces. Vehicles belonging to humanitarian agencies were particularly targeted by thieves.

24. Some examples of violent attacks on humanitarian personnel and assets during the reporting period are set out below:

(a) In the Abéché area, on 9 November 2007, a local staff member of the International Criminal Court was attacked by two armed men at his home.

(b) In Assoungha department, on 7 November 2007, a convoy from the non-governmental organization CORD was fired upon by unknown assailants while en route to the Breidjing refugee camp. The convoy returned to Farchana, but one driver was wounded.

(c) On 12 November 2007 two UNHCR staff were robbed in the Farchana camp by armed men who stole their vehicle.

(d) On 1 May 2008, the country director of Save the Children UK was killed by unidentified armed men while he was on a protection/education mission with UNICEF 10 km from Farchana camp.

(e) There were four other major incidents in the Dar Sila department: on 2 July 2007 a staff member of Doctors without Borders (MSF)-France was killed by a member of the Chad military in Dogdore. On 8 July 2007 a combined World Food Programme/MSF-France convoy was attacked, resulting in one death and the theft of food and medicine. On 28 August 2007 a national staff member of COOPI was assaulted, beaten and wounded by three armed personnel. On 23 November 2007 armed men broke into the MSF-France and OXFAM compounds in Koukou, injuring two international staff and a Chadian guard. They left with a considerable sum of money and communications equipment.

(f) In Biltine department, on 3 July 2007 a UNHCR driver was attacked and beaten at his home by military personnel in Guéréda. On 14 May 2008, two gendarmes working for the governmental body in charge of the security of camps (CNAR) were killed and another was injured in a bandit attack 3 km from Touloum camp (Iriba). One of the bandits was arrested by the police.

25. In 2008 alone, 40 cases of attacks targeting humanitarian personnel and assets in eastern Chad have been registered, including five deadly attacks. As a result of increasing insecurity, by the end of May, MSF-Luxembourg totally suspended its activities in the area of Iriba. The non-governmental organization was working in refugee camps at Touloum and Iridimi which host around 53,000 refugees. With the suspension of MSF-Luxembourg activities, humanitarian agencies raised concern about the health coverage among refugees and surrounding local communities. The World Health Organization also expressed concern over a 10 per cent decrease in health coverage in the district of Am Dam with the pullout of non-governmental organizations active in an area hosting 14,000 internally displaced persons. A similar lack of health coverage might occur in the areas of Goz Bagar, Goundiang and Alacha, which host 22,000 internally displaced persons.

26. Demonstrations in N'Djamena in November 2007 against the French non-governmental organization Arche de Zoé (see section F below) turned against foreigners in general. The whole episode had a negative impact on the way foreigners and humanitarian staff are now perceived by the population.

E. Attacks on schools and hospitals

27. Though no direct attacks on schools were reported, two attacks against school teachers in the Goz Beida area occurred, in October and November 2007. In the October incident, a teacher was brutally murdered in Goz Beida with a dozen gunshot wounds. In the November incident, a teacher was physically aggressed in the internally displaced person site of Koloma.

28. Access to schools remains an issue of concern. Obstacles for internally displaced and other children include economic pressures, as children are increasingly required to contribute to household income. In many cases, children may be handed over by their parents to Marabout (religious teachers) and/or other non-family members to work in slavery-like conditions. Children may also be engaged in tasks such as gathering wood, fishing, and agricultural work during seasonal periods. Girls especially are the victims of lack of access to education as they are expected to participate in domestic tasks more than boys. Information campaigns have been carried out to increase the awareness of the importance of education for boys and girls. Innovative approaches should be explored to resolve this issue, such as flexible hours, shifts or financial incentives.

F. Abduction of children

29. Abduction of children also occurs in Chad as a result of the armed conflict. Armed groups such as the Janjaweed and Toroboro continue to frequently abduct children. In September 2007, in Mayo Dallah in the south of Chad, 15 children were kidnapped, and two of them were killed because their armed captors did not receive the ransoms they demanded. The availability of small arms throughout the country aggravates this trend.

30. During the reporting period, it should also be noted that the Chadian authorities intercepted employees of the French non-governmental organization Arche de Zoé who were leading 103 young children to Abéché airport, in eastern Chad. An aircraft was waiting to fly to France where French families were awaiting reception of the children. According to preliminary investigations by the United Nations agencies involved, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the National Red Cross and the delegation of the Ministry of Social Affairs, there were 21 girls and 82 boys aged 1 to 10, the majority being between 4 and 5. According to information provided by the children themselves, they were from the Assoungha region (Adre and Tine) in eastern Chad bordering Darfur, where they lived with parents or relatives. UNHCR, UNICEF and ICRC provided interim care and organized the reunification of all 103 children with their families. Six French nationals working for the organization were held in custody, and underwent judicial investigations in Chad. They were found guilty of the abduction charge and condemned to eight years of forced labour in Chad. Pursuant to an agreement between Chad and France on such cases, the French convicts were transferred to France by late December 2007. Since forced labour does not exist in French criminal law, the penalty was changed to eight years of prison. On 31 March 2008 the President of Chad, Idriss Déby Itno, pardoned the six members of the organization and they were freed.

IV. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

31. The beginning of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration activities in Chad is a very positive step in addressing violations of child rights. It follows the agreement between UNICEF and the Government of Chad, signed on 9 May 2007, to ensure the release and sustainable reintegration of all children associated with armed forces and groups in Chad. This protocol follows the signature by Chad on 6 February 2007 of the Paris Commitments. Since the agreement, 512 child soldiers have been released to UNICEF, which provided support at five transit centres. So far 265 have voluntarily returned to or been reunited with their families, and 220 have been placed in schools and 85 in professional activities. Profiling the remaining children at the transit centres is now a priority, to determine what is best for each, and negotiations are under way for their placement in professional training institutions (including in livestock) as well as in income-generating activities. CARE Canada, the Christian Children's Fund, and Jesuit Refugee Services are the partners of UNICEF currently working on the reintegration programme.

32. A seminar on child rights held in N'Djamena on 22 and 23 October 2007 pointed out the shortcomings of the Government of Chad on the protection of child rights, such as the lack of respect of international standards regarding child recruitment and use of children in armed forces. It should be reiterated that, to date, most of the demobilized children were associated with non-governmental armed groups. Very few children reportedly associated with the Chadian armed forces have been released.

33. Another major issue in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration remains cross-border reunification. Of the 512 children released in Chad, 32 require reunification with their communities in the Sudan. ICRC is currently trying to locate families on the basis of information provided by 22 of the children.

34. The encouraging start of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration activities in Chad is likely to lead to the release of another estimated 2,500 children associated with armed forces and groups over the coming months (out of an estimated total of 7,000 to 10,000 children). The cost of continuing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration activities is estimated at $3 million. The contingency plan covering such an eventuality is ready for implementation at short notice.

V. Dialogue with parties to conflict and advocacy for child protection

35. There is no contact between the United Nations system present in Chad and armed opposition groups. Implementation of the agreement signed on 25 October in Sirte, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, between the Government of Chad and armed opposition groups has been limited. In fact, the outbreaks of violence in February 2008 and in June 2008 deepened the state of mistrust and limited hopes for progress. As a result, political dialogue, as well as child protection dialogue to develop action plans to release children associated with armed groups is highly compromised, even if the parties were willing to enter into such a dialogue.

36. Ending grave violations against children will not be possible unless significant progress is made in the political dimension. A successful initiative by UNHCR to gather 100 traditional leaders to discuss peace demonstrates the potential that exists to resolve conflict in the country. The full deployment of a multidimensional presence in Chad and the Central African Republic pursuant to resolution 1778 (2008) would also greatly contribute to ensuring a bottom-up approach to dialogue and reconciliation mechanisms, contribute to restoring traditional mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution, particularly with regard to the return of internally displaced persons, and create favourable conditions for reconstruction and economic and social development.

37. The visit to Chad of my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Radhika Coomaraswamy, on 26 and 27 May 2008, was a major breakthrough in the political dialogue with the Government. The primary objective of the regional visit she undertook was to assess at first hand the situation of the children, and to enhance advocacy for better protection of children. To this end, she met with the Ministers of Justice, Social Affairs and Defence. She also met with the Prime Minister to raise major child protection concerns. During her meetings, she focused on critical themes such as cross-border recruitment of children, sexual violence against girls, the safety of humanitarian personnel and assets, and the security of sites for internally displaced persons and refugee camps. Particular attention was paid to the issue of child recruitment by State and non-State actors. Finally, she reiterated the need to hold perpetrators accountable.

38. My Special Representative welcomed the engagement of the Government of Chad and the positive developments that are expected following her visit. As a result of the mission, Chad committed itself to crucial progress in the area of child protection. It agreed on a verification process by United Nations teams in detention centres, training camps and military facilities. It also undertook to release as a matter of priority children associated with armed groups held in detention. Finally, it was decided that an inter-ministerial task force would be established to coordinate and ensure effective reintegration of children.

VI. Follow-up and programmatic response to violations

39. The response to the grave violations discussed above and other protection issues aims at ensuring that children are provided with access to the necessary assistance, whether medical, psychosocial, or legal. In order to foster collaboration and coordination among partners and within the United Nations system, protection focal points and referral systems are currently being developed. Standard operating procedures guarantee the consent of the individual and confidentiality of the information, reported through the protection cluster mechanism. For child protection specifically, the establishment by the end of 2007 of a child protection sub-cluster in Abéché (eastern Chad) is an important step towards ensuring systematic attention, discussion of and response to child protection issues among all the relevant partners in the humanitarian community in this part of the country, where violations are particularly reported.

40. In sites occupied by internally displaced persons, protection officers organize protection appraisals using the AGDM model (age, gender and diversity mainstreaming) to identify, document and follow up individual cases of human

rights violations, coordinate investigations in liaison with local authorities, undertake missions to border areas, register and record refugees and their families, provide familiarization/training to promote refugee rights, monitor population movements, monitor detention centres and provide judicial and substantive assistance to internally displaced persons, support refugee committees, and familiarize staff on the rules governing the proper functioning of camps.

41. The Security Council established the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) to help to create security conditions conducive to the voluntary, secure and sustainable return of refugees and displaced persons. It also authorized the European Union to deploy an operation to eastern Chad and the north-eastern Central African Republic for a one-year period (EUFOR). The Council also allowed the establishment of a Chadian special police element (Détachement intégré de sécurité) composed of 850 officers who will be selected, trained, monitored and advised by an international police component composed of 300 United Nations police officers. The presence of MINURCAT and EUFOR in Chad and the Central African Republic is expected to significantly reduce violations of child rights in eastern Chad through the protection of the civilian population, particularly refugees and internally displaced persons, but also to facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance and the free movement of personnel. Considering the regional dimension of the conflict and the spill-over of the Darfur crisis in Chad, the deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) is also expected to complement the efforts of the international community to ensure the protection of child rights in Chad, the Sudan and the subregion as a whole.

42. Awareness-raising campaigns are also under way as part of the response to child recruitment and use. Efforts concentrate on highlighting the civilian and humanitarian nature of refugee and internally displaced person camps, on training gendarmes on protection of refugees and the internally displaced and on the Paris Principles. Protection mechanisms have been put in place in coordination with local law enforcement authorities and seminars have been conducted to better raise awareness within communities on child protection and the use of children by armed forces and groups. In response to rape and other serious violations of child rights, information campaigns have been carried out, in particular with groups of internally displaced youth and women, focusing on security issues and raising awareness on the dangers of female genital mutilation.

43. Attention is also given to programmatic response to mines and unexploded ordnance. Key partners in this area include the National High Commission for Demining, UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Office for Project Services, the Ministry of Education and ICRC. UNDP supports the High Commission in implementing mine-clearance activities. ICRC carried out an evaluation of knowledge and attitudes of the population towards mines and unexploded ordnance and trained volunteers of the Chadian Red Cross. UNICEF takes the lead in providing mine-risk education through resource mobilization efforts, and the provision of funds to the National High Commission to field teams to sensitize communities on the issues. The allotted funds cover the costs of office equipment, training of the teams, vehicles and mine-risk education materials, and radio preventive messages. UNICEF also assists the High Commission to gather information on the victims of mines and unexploded

ordnance. In 2008, UNICEF intends to introduce in the curricula of schools information on mine-risk dangers and prevention.

44. Apart from the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration initiatives mentioned above, UNICEF has put in place concrete activities to respond to child rights violations. Those are, for example, the creation of "child-friendly spaces" that provide the opportunity for protection officers to take care of children whose rights are threatened, the establishment of a network of community members dealing with child protection, trained by UNICEF on child protection, and the provision of support to women and children who are victims of sexual violence. The UNICEF office in Chad has also prepared a comprehensive, integrated action plan to address the specific issue of child recruitment and use.

45. Given the regional dimension of the conflict, the visit of my Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict to Chad and the Central African Republic in May 2008 has also been the opportunity to strengthen the coordination among MINURCAT, the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA) and respective United Nations country teams. As a result, cooperation will be furthered in cross-border child protection issues such as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, family reunification, monitoring and reporting of violations of child rights, staff exchanges, and information-sharing.

VII. Recommendations

To all parties to the conflict

46. All relevant parties are urged, as a matter of priority, to implement the recommendations set out in my first report on the situation of children and armed conflict in Chad (S/2007/400) and the subsequent conclusions and recommendations of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict (S/AC.51/2007/16), and to comply without further delay with the resolutions of the Security Council on children and armed conflict to halt the grave child rights violations and abuses for which they have been cited.

47. All parties are urged as a matter of priority to enter into dialogue to develop action plans to identify and release children from their ranks, in the framework of resolution 1612 (2005) and on the basis of the criteria established for action plans.

To the Government of Chad

48. The Government of Chad is strongly urged to fully cooperate with the work of the United Nations Task Force in accordance with resolution 1612 (2005). United Nations teams should be allowed to conduct verification in detention centres, military facilities and training camps. A focal point should also be appointed within the presidency to follow up on child protection issues, to coordinate related actions and to liaise with the Task Force.

49. With a view to ending impunity, the Government is urged to criminalize the recruitment and use of child soldiers under domestic laws and to take measures accordingly against any individuals responsible for such practices.

50. The Government is urged to make provisions for sustainable reintegration of all children associated with armed forces and groups, including by adequate

allocation of resources and implementation of an inter-ministerial task force on reintegration.

51. As a matter of priority, the Chadian authorities should also increase security and protection of the civilian populations in and around refugee camps and internally displaced person sites.

52. The Chadian authorities should also assume full responsibility under international humanitarian law for ensuring the safety of humanitarian workers, the inviolability of their equipment and their timely access to populations in need of humanitarian assistance.

53. While I welcome the positive steps taken by Chad and the signing of the agreement with UNICEF, I urge the Government to continue to do its utmost to protect children's rights throughout the territory. The Government is responsible for ensuring that children's rights are respected by all armed groups present in its territory and facilitating, by all means necessary, the implementation of concrete, time-bound action plans in line with resolution 1612 (2005) to release children from these groups.

To the United Nations

54. MINURCAT, the United Nations country team and the Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting are requested to follow up on the recommendations in my first report on the situation of children in Chad (S/2007/400) and the subsequent conclusions and recommendations of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict (S/AC.51/2007/16), and to report on progress.

55. Given the regional dimension of the crisis, involving the Central African Republic, the Sudan and Chad, UNAMID, MINURCAT, BONUCA and respective United Nations country teams are encouraged to further dedicate the required and timely support and resources to ensure that mechanisms are in place for information exchange and cooperation between respective United Nations country teams and peacekeeping and political missions on child protection issues such as cross-border abduction and release and reintegration of children.

56. My Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict is requested to prepare a follow-up mission to Chad to ensure the implementation of my recommendations on the situation of children in Chad (S/2007/400), the subsequent conclusions of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict (S/AC.51/2007/16) and the present report.